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INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 6514
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SUBJECT: MORALES HALTS DEAL IN CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY

¶1. (SBU) Amidst rumors that President Morales' Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party was approaching a deal with the opposition on whether to use a two-thirds or a majority vote for constitutional changes, Morales travelled to Sucre February 6 and halted his party's negotiations. According to press reports, Morales ordered that the MAS' February 3 agreement with the National Unity (UN) party be amended to include a single referendum to resolve debate over controversial articles and to approve the entire constitution. While one MAS delegate said Morales encouraged the party to continue working toward a compromise, most view Morales' visit as obstructionist. One UN delegate said negotiations had taken another step backward and said it would be better to close Assembly than to keep wasting Bolivian taxpayers' money.

¶2. (SBU) Comment: CA negotiations tend to adhere to the following pattern: 1) MAS delegates attempt to compromise with the opposition, 2) a high-level GOB official visits Sucre to reinstall party discipline, and 3) negotiations break down. The CA is officially half way through its one year mandate and has failed to make progress on any front. Some opposition analysts believe the MAS' stalling technique furthers its plan to railroad a new constitution through the Assembly at the eleventh hour. If such a plan exists, it risks denying Bolivians the thing they want most-- a new constitution. End comment.
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